

WANDERERS FIND IT SUCH A STRUGGLE

A SINGLE goal — in the 35th minute of Saturday's Rothmans Isthmian League encounter gave Wycombe Wanderers their expected victory over Walthamstow Avenue. But for much of this dull and lifeless game, the champions struggled to knit as a team and seemed to have their minds on next week's F.A. Cup battle with Bournemouth.

The scorer of what was to prove the deciding goal was Dylan Evans — who is first becoming something of a 'bogey' to Walthamstow. Last season at Green Pond Lane, Dylan scored all four goals in the Blues' 4-0 triumph and on Saturday he was on target again. He was playing in place of Keith Searle, ruled out with 'flu.

Despite working hard, Evans' lack of understanding with his two other front runners — Toddy Horseman and Steve Perrin — was all too obvious at times and Searle's aerial ability was sadly missed. In fact, many of the passes went astray from Wycombe and a few of the players were able to combine consistently.

Some of the blame can be attached to a hard pitch and deceptive wind but that still does not excuse the poor distribution from midfield, where none of the three home players were at their best. This lack of authority obviously took its toll on the forwards who were deprived of good service.

It was just as well the defence was in form on the day. Alan Phillips had a fine game and it was his timely interceptions and excellent heading that kept the scoresheet to 1-0. Dave Bullock too, playing in place of the injured Keith Mead, improved after a shaky start, making a string of well timed tackles.

Walthamstow, with former Bishop's Stortford star Dennis

Murphy now in their ranks, looked a fair side. But it was Chester Brown, a West Indian who signed from West Ham recently, who caught the eye early on. His speed had

header over the crossbar from a corner but it was Avenue who kept the initiative in the opening stages as Wycombe failed to generate any enthusiasm.

Gradually though, Wanderers

dealt with the situation.

The only goal of the game came in the 35th minute. Holifield started it all by taking Lindsay's poor goalkick down on his thigh and sprinting

applause at half time summed up a poor first half — and the second was to prove little better.

It took seven minutes to create the first chance. Gary Hand, who was not as positive

By STUART EARP: Wycombe Wanderers 1, Walthamstow Avenue 0

everyone of the back four in trouble and it was fortunate for Wycombe that he faded later in the game.

Brown was in the thick of things after only two minutes when he forced John Maskell to go full length to keep out a long range volley. Then Brian Jackson's long ball from midfield almost set up another chance but Phillips was on hand to hastily pass back to his 'keeper.

Bullock replied with a firm

began to get into the game with Horseman sending a diving header towards the near post and then driving a hard shot straight at goalkeeper Vic Lindsay a minute later. Both Perrin and Paul Birdseye figured in the build-up.

Unfortunately, it was one of the few memorable attacks in the first half. Often the Blues were content to loft the ball upfield hopefully while the ground passing was so slow, it gave Walthamstow ample time to

through a square defence. He then checked before slipping the ball inside to Horseman, who in turn carried the move on to Perrin. Steve blasted in a cross-shot along the face of goal and Evans, at the far post, had the simplest of tasks in slotting the ball home from four yards.

That at least instilled some life into Wycombe and from a 40th minute corner Phillips saw his powerful header fisted over by the 'keeper.

The noticeable lack of

as usual, joined the attack to hammer in a swerving drive but Lindsay got down well to save. Then Evans was only inches away from a second goal when Horseman ran 20 yards before turning the ball inside. Surrounded by defenders, Dylan did well to get in a shot at all, let alone shave the near post.

The visitors at this time, had little to offer upfront. Brown went off the boil while veteran Terry Howard was rarely in the

game and spent most of his time out of action on the flank. Despite winning most of the possession, however, Wycombe were rarely able to use it. They became too intricate in their attacks, tended to bunch and ignored the open spaces on the wings.

About the best chance of the second half fell to Evans in the 75th minute. He created the opportunity with a fine through ball to Holifield on the top side. Mick crossed into the middle beating the goalkeeper's dive and the half clearance from Collins came out to Evans. But with only one defender on the line, Dylan screwed his shot wide of the mark.

Three corners in the last quarter promised a second goal and some relief to the crowd but about the closest they came was when Lindsay punched a Horseman free kick clear at full stretch.

I fancy referee Bray's final whistle was something of a relief to both the players and the spectators.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, A. Phillips, D. Bullock, G. Hand, M. Holifield, T. Reardon, H. Kennedy, A. Horseman, D. Evans, S. Perrin. Sub: D. Alexander (not used).

WALTHAMSTOW: V. Lindsay, J. Knottman, D. Collins, M. James, P. O'Reilly, S. Trice, R. Wiles, B. Jackson, D. Murphy, C. Brown, T. Howard. Sub: J. Redding (not used).

Referee: K. Bray (Norwich).

Half time: 1-0. **Goalscorer:** Wycombe — Evans (35).

Official paying attendance: 1,361. **Approximate total attendance:** 1,500.